

The National Kidney Disease Education Program (NKDEP)

The National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases (NIDDK) of the National Institutes of Health has recently initiated the National Kidney Disease Education Program (NKDEP). This program will raise awareness about the seriousness of kidney disease, and the importance of prevention, early diagnosis, and appropriate management of the disease and its complications.

More than eight million Americans have seriously reduced kidney function, and nearly 400,000 require dialysis or a kidney transplant to stay alive. The number of people developing kidney failure has doubled each decade for the last two decades, and will likely continue to do so. These increases appear to parallel the rising prevalence of diabetes, the leading cause of kidney disease.

Fortunately, kidney failure can be slowed, if not prevented. Evidence shows that blood glucose and blood pressure control can reduce the risk of kidney complications. Low protein diets have also been shown consistently to lessen progression as well. Despite these advances in treatment and prevention, only a small fraction of people at serious risk or with established but early kidney disease are receiving proper screening or treatment.

The program is being modeled after the successful federal National High Blood Pressure and National Diabetes Education Programs. The NIDDK held a series of planning meetings between July 2000 and June 2001 to review the current state of kidney disease in the

United States and to develop strategies for the education program. A Steering Committee of kidney organizations, federal agencies, community organizations and health professional organizations was convened in September 2001 to provide guidance in developing the program's priorities.

The program will target primary care providers and people at high risk for kidney disease, particularly those with diabetes, hypertension and/or a family history of kidney failure. In its first phase, NKDEP will conduct educational campaigns for at-risk African Americans and health care providers in four pilot sites. Messages will focus on identifying risk factors for kidney disease, screening those at risk, and providing appropriate treatment for those who are diagnosed with kidney disease. The four pilot sites are Baltimore, MD; Atlanta, GA; Jackson, MS; and Cleveland, OH. These sites will enable the program to identify successful strategies to launch a broader national campaign. In its next phase, NKDEP will broaden its reach to American Indians and Hispanic/Latinos.

Other program activities include creating a compendium of existing educational programs and resources on chronic kidney disease; developing clinical tools for primary care providers; improving laboratory reporting of kidney function; and developing an evaluation plan to assess the program's impact on the target audiences at the pilot sites as well as the long-term impact of the overall program.